

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

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INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

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CINCLANT FOR POLAD

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BRIDGETOWN 1326

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT MH

SUBJ: MONTSERRAT ELECTION SEPTEMBER 20

REF: BRIDGETOWN A-149, A-167, A-173 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: CHIEF MINISTER P. AUSTIN BRAMBLE, WHO HAS CALLED MID-TERM GENERAL ELECTIONS ON SEPTEMBER 20 IN ORDER TO OBTAIN POPULAR MANDATE AGAINST "RACISM," IS EXPECTED TO RETAIN EASILY HIS PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S MAJORITY IN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

1. PDP CANDIDATES ARE BEING CONTESTED IN ALL SEVEN CONSTITUENCIES BY TOTAL OF AT LEAST ELEVEN OTHER CANDIDATES, ALL INDEPENDENTS. BRAMBLE HIMSELF, WHO FACES THREE CHALLENGERS IS NOT RPT NOT EXPECTED TO ENCOUNTER SERIOUS DIFFICULTY IN WINNING REELECTION. NOR IS THE PDP'S OTHER PRIMARY LEADER, MARY TUITT, WHO BEAT SAME OPPONENT DECISIVELY IN 1970 ELECTION. OF THE OPPOSITION CANDIDATES, JOHN OSBORNE, FORMER MEMBER OF PDP GOVERNMENT WHO IS NOW

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OPPOSING PDP AS AN INDEPENDENT AND WHO HAS BEEN MEMBER OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SINCE 1966, IS MOST LIKELY TO WIN SEAT

IN COUNCIL, WHERE PDP WON ALL SEVEN SEATS IN 1970.

2. ALTHOUGH NEXT GENERAL ELECTION WAS NOT DUE UNTIL 1976, BRAMBLE DECIDED TO CALL ELECTION AT MID-TERM IN ORDER TO OBTAIN POPULAR MANDATE TO HEAD OFF INCIPIENT RACIAL HOSTILITY WHICH HE SEES AS POTENTIAL THREAT TO HIS GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM OF MAINTAINING CONTROLLED ROLE FOR FOREIGN PARTICIPATION IN MONTSERRAT'S SOCIETY WHILE ASSURING MONSERRATIANS A PRIMARY ROLE.

3. BRAMBLE'S FEARS ARE BELIEVED NOT TO REFLECT SERIOUS CHALLENGE FROM ANY BLACK RADICAL GROUP BUT RATHER THE KIND OF INCIDENT WHICH OCCURS IN MOST OF THESE ISLANDS FROM TIME TO TIME (E.G. VISITING TOURIST SUBJECTED TO ANTI-WHITE ABUSE, MUGGING OF BRITISH SAILOR, ETC.). SUCH INCIDENT CONSTITUTES MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR MONTSERRAT, WHEN IT DOES OCCUR, BECAUSE OF ISLAND'S SMALL SIZE (39 SQUARE MILES, 13,000 PERSONS) AND FACT THAT IN SUCH SMALL COMMUNITY NEWS OF RACE-RELATED CONFRONTATION SPREADS RAPIDLY AND CREATES CHARGED ATMOSPHERE OUT OF PROPORTION TO INCIDENT ITSELF. IN ADDITION, BRAMBLE IS SAID TO BE CONCERNED OVER EVIDENCE OF ATTEMPTS TO USE SOME OF MONTSERRAT'S EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES TO MOBILIZE RACIST SENTIMENTS.

4. IN SUMMARY, PDP SHOULD EASILY RETAIN ITS MAJORITY IN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, PROBABLY LOSING ONE SEAT TO POLITICAL VETERAN JOHN OSBORNE AND POSSIBLE ONE OTHER SEAT. AUSTIN BRAMBLE WILL NO DOUBT INTERPRET ELECTION'S RESULTS AS THE POPULAR MANDATE HE SOUGHT.
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